

Safely Surrendered Babies: Report to the Legislature, February 2017

Executive Summary

Since 2001, California has responded to the dilemma of baby abandonment by providing a life-saving alternative for distressed parents who are unwilling or unable to care for a newborn child. Through the enactment of SB 1368 (Brulte, Chapter 824, Statutes of 2000), a parent or individual having lawful custody of a newborn is granted immunity from criminal prosecution for specific crimes relating to child abandonment if the parent or surrendering individual surrenders the baby at a hospital or other designated safe surrender site within 72 hours of the child's birth.



AB 1048 (Torrico, Chapter 567, Statutes of 2010) requires the California Department to Social Services (CDSS) to report to the Legislature annually on the effectiveness of the Safely Surrendered Baby Law.

The *Safely Surrendered Babies, Report to the Legislature, February 2017*, makes the following findings:

- A total of 83 infants were safely surrendered in 2015, of whom seven were reclaimed by a parent. This brings the total number of Safely Surrendered children to 787 since the law was implemented in 2001.
- The Safe Surrender law has been a success, with the rate of abandonments decreasing from 25 cases in 2002 to six or fewer cases per year since 2010. This is an 80 percent decrease in infant abandonments statewide in the past fifteen years.
- Five children were found abandoned alive in 2015. There were no abandoned deceased children reported in 2015, the first year since the law began in 2001 in which California has completely avoided the tragedy of infant death as a consequence of abandonment.

Moving forward, CDSS' Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) plans to revise and promote outreach materials. The outreach efforts will include an increase in the number of languages in which Safely Surrendered Baby (SSB) materials are available, working to increase the visibility of SSB site locations and promoting the SSB hotline, 877-BabySaf.

Additional copies of this report can be obtained from CDSS Office of Legislation, (916) 657-2623. It can also be obtained on the CDSS website: www.babysafe.ca.gov.